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**REASON & REVELATION**

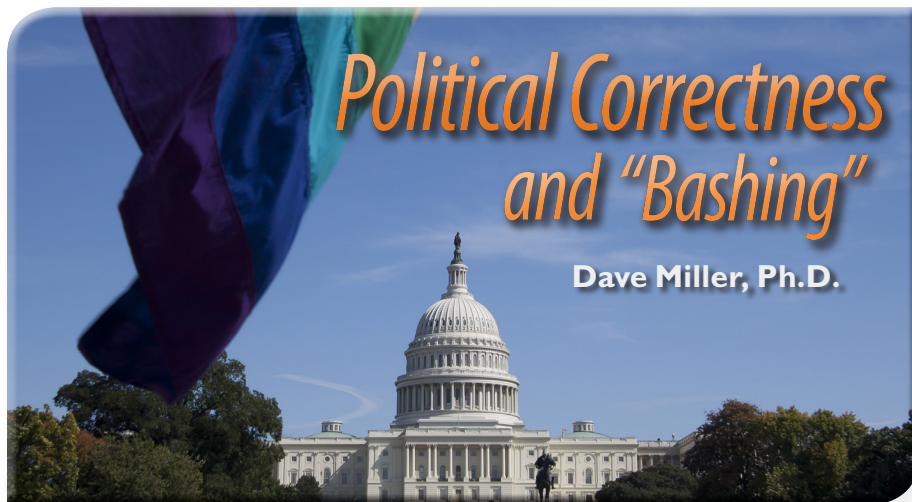
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# POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AND “Bashing”



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**T**HE adverse impact of “political correctness” on American culture cannot be overstated. Its sinister influence has been monumental and subversive in the extent to which it has reshaped American values, literally driving the population farther **away from** its Christian moorings, and redirecting civilization **toward** hedonism, socialism, atheism, humanism, and a host of other anti-Christian philosophies. As Chicago University Professor Allan Bloom rightly documented in his bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, the average college student in the last 50 years has been brainwashed to accept the notions that truth is relative, absolutism is therefore wrong, and that the only real virtue is openness and tolerance (1987, pp. 25-26). Intolerance, therefore, is the ultimate and only sin. Under the guise of “sensitivity” and “diversity,” political and social liberalism have contributed mightily to stripping from the American way of life its original values and moral principles that built America into the great nation she has been. As judge Robert Bork noted in his *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline*, universities are subjecting students to “diversity training” as they are bullied, intimidated, and even coerced into avoiding language that is deemed “insensitive” to feminists, homosexuals,

and others (now even Muslims)—those who fully intend to silence all opposition to their anti-Christian behavior (1996, pp. 214ff., 240, 298ff.). These ideologies have been so sinister and pervasive in society for the last several decades that otherwise clear thinking Christian people—especially young people—have been unconsciously or unknowingly affected. Since the universities of America have successively convinced three generations of Americans that objective truth no longer exists, many Americans seem to have difficulty engaging in rational evaluation of false ideologies. They have been made to believe that if they engage in logical evaluation of a viewpoint and conclude that the viewpoint is incorrect, they must keep their “opinion” to themselves lest they be guilty of the inexcusable evil of “judging” and “bashing” others.

One area wherein “political correctness” has made encroachments into the thinking of Christians is seen in their reluctance and hesitation to be specific in identifying religious and moral error and those who promulgate it. A general feeling seems to exist that, while one may not agree with a particular behavior or viewpoint, nevertheless, it is inappropriate to publicly speak against the behavior or identify those who espouse the viewpoint or behavior. To do so is deemed unkind and uncompassionate.

It is ever the case that error and falsehood are self-contradictory, and typically guilty of the same malady it imagines in others. Observe that those who express their disdain for “bashing” do not hesitate to bash the ones they accuse of bashing, and to do so publicly. They openly express to others (people who have no real connection to the matter) their rejection of and dislike for specific persons and groups who have had the unmitigated gall to express disapproval of a false religion or an immoral action (e.g., New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn’s letter to the president of New York University, claiming that “the President of Chik-fil-A continues to make statements and support causes that are clear messages of extreme intolerance and homophobia and a belief that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender [LGBT] Americans are less than others,” adding, “I do not want establishments in my city that hold such discriminatory views”—see Editorial, 2012). The “bashing” measuring stick is inherently hypocritical, self-contradictory, and frankly, absurd.

The only solution to moral chaos, religious confusion, and sexual anarchy is to return to the reasonable perspective that absolute truth exists, as does an objective standard of morality to which all humans are amenable. As Founding Father Thomas Jefferson observed in a letter from Paris addressed to James Madison and dated August 28, 1789: “I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively” (1789). That code of morality derives from the Creator of the Universe—whom the Founders identified as “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” (*Declaration....*, 1776).

Religious truth and morality must not be determined by our **feelings**, subjective inclinations, or personal preferences. In the grand scheme of things, human opinions simply do not



matter. Rather, all humans are obligated to go to the only objective standard of right and wrong that transcends human opinion: the Bible. We must allow the only supernatural book in the world to shape our thinking. Only by turning to God's Word can we achieve proper perspective and arrive at the only legitimate viewpoint. We must place each and every idea under the light of God's Word before jumping to conclusions and finalizing personal opinions. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

### DEFINING TERMS

**D**OES the Bible teach that it is unkind, sinful, or inappropriate to name individuals or express a negative evaluation of specific persons, religions, or behaviors publicly? Is doing so to be guilty of "bashing" them? In order to answer these questions, consider the following observations.

First, we must define terms to make certain that we pinpoint the issue. Various dictionaries define "bashing" as "to engage in harsh, accusatory, threatening criticism"; "a harsh, gratuitous, prejudicial attack on a person, group or subject. Literally, bashing is a term meaning to hit or assault, but when it is used as a suffix, or in conjunction with a noun indicating the subject being attacked, it is normally used to imply that the act is motivated by bigotry."

When we turn to the Bible, we find that God desires that Christians "[l]et all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32; cf. Colossians 3:12). Christians are to let their "speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6), "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), "in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1), "in humility

correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Timothy 2:25), "having compassion for one another" (1 Peter 3:8). Christians are to love everyone—even their enemies (Matthew 5:44). They are to treat others the way they themselves desire to be treated (Matthew 7:12). If such is the case, does it not logically follow that we should refrain from speaking against purveyors of religious or moral error, since doing so would be unkind, malicious, and certainly not something we would want done to us? The biblical answer to that question is an unequivocal "no."

To interpret the above verses in such a manner would result in a conclusion that is diametrically opposed to a host of other verses. We must "handle aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, ASV), making certain that our understanding of one passage or concept does not conflict with other passages and principles. It is true that those who hold the truth on a particular doctrine can be guilty of mistreating and being unkind to those who embrace error; but it does not follow that the mere act of identifying error publicly is **inherently** unkind, insensitive, or intolerant. Why?

The Bible clearly teaches that evaluating the legitimacy of a viewpoint or practice, and then identifying those who promote that erroneous belief or practice, are not only **appropriate actions**, **but they are expected and required of the faithful**. False religion flourishes first and foremost by means of the failure of the proponents of truth to step forth and confront the error. Irish statesman Edmund Burke is often credited with the idea that: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." One of the great tragedies of our day, with the decline of American civilization and the Christian religion in America, is that error has become so predominant that the advocates of truth have been bullied into sheepish silence. America is literally being inundated with immorality and destructive religious and political philosophies due, in large part, to the mistaken notion that fatal error should not be openly confronted, exposed, and condemned.

Consider this parallel: when a child engages in behavior that is disobedient, or even dangerous to his own physical safety, a parent is called upon to discipline the child. A variety of

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forms of discipline might be used in the process, including instruction, verbal reprimands, removal of privileges, physical restraint, and even corporal punishment (in harmony with Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; et al.; cf. Miller, 2003). What child in such a predicament does **not** think the parents are being unkind, harsh, insensitive, accusatory, and intolerant? The child would likely view the parents' actions as violent. If the parent raises his or her voice in the process, the parent could easily be perceived as mean or out of control. Yet, the child's perception reflects immaturity, as well as a lack of spiritual development and the cultivation of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in one's heart and life (cf. Hebrews 12:11). Observe, then, that those who raise the specter of "bashing," immediately dismissing anyone who speaks against a religion or behavior, are actually spiritually immature individuals who have not yet grasped the mind of Christ.

### THE ONLY STANDARD

**D**OES the Bible provide instances in which God, Christ, or their approved representatives called names or criticized specific persons, groups, doctrines, and behaviors? Did Jesus or the apostles ever mention people by name and identify the error being espoused? Did God's emissaries ever speak out **publicly** against specific persons and viewpoints? As a matter of fact, the Bible is replete with such instances. Consider the following few from both Old and New Testaments which illustrate and confirm this ongoing feature of God's nature.

#### Old Testament Examples

(1) **Numbers 16:** Moses confronted Korah, Dathan, and Abiram publicly—in the presence of their families and even the entire nation.

(2) **Numbers 25:** The names of Zimri and Cozbi are forever publicly

emblazoned in Scripture for their evil deeds. They were fatally confronted by the courageous Phinehas. God Himself issued to the entire congregation of Israel His own assessment of their sexually immoral behavior and the valiant response by Phinehas.

(3) **Deuteronomy 13:** Three scenarios in Israelite society are set forth in which the death penalty was to be invoked. All three concerned the attempt to introduce idolatry into society, whether by a prophet, a family member, or an entire city. In all three cases, the responsible individuals were to be dealt with publicly, with the entire community ("the hand of all the people") participating in the executions. No concern for privacy was shown to the perpetrators who sought to subvert people from the right ways of God.

(4) **Joshua 7:** After a glorious victory over Jericho, the nation was plunged into despair by the military defeat at Ai—a fiasco that resulted in the deaths of 36 men and caused the entire population to degenerate into a state of frightful panic. When Joshua tore his clothes, fell on his face before God, whining about their predicament, he asked God why He allowed such to happen. God snapped him back to reality rather quickly with these words: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them" (Joshua 7:10-11). God identified the transgression as theft and deceit, but did not specify who in the nation was responsible. Instead, he instructed Joshua to call the nation together the next day and to ascertain the guilty ones (by casting lots—1 Samuel 14:41-42; cf. 1 Samuel 10:19-21; Jonah 1:7; Proverbs 16:33; NOTE: observe the triple use of an expression that further indicates the method was casting lots: "which the LORD takes" [vs. 14]). Joshua was to bring forward the tribal groups, and then work down

through the family clans, the households, and finally, the individual men in each household. The process commenced the next morning, culminating with Achan being pinpointed as the culprit. Once the ill-gotten items which he had illegally confiscated from Jericho were recovered from his tent, Joshua urged Achan to confess his sin. Having done so, he was taken to the Valley of Achor and executed. These events were done publicly, as indicated by the expressions "all the children of Israel" (vs. 23), "all Israel with him" (vs. 24), and "all Israel" (vs. 25). **Question:** Were God and Joshua's actions "motivated by bigotry"? Were their actions "a harsh, gratuitous, prejudicial attack" on Achan and his family? Did they "engage in harsh, accusatory, threatening criticism"? Were they guilty of violating the Golden Rule, or bashing?

(5) **1 Kings 18:** Elijah engaged in a public disputation with those who promoted an erroneous religion. He even "mocked" (vs. 27) the false prophets as the day wore on and their public humiliation increased. When a courageous spokesman for truth and morality stands up publicly and confronts people, or admonishes or rebukes them, he is merely emulating the same behavior Elijah exhibited—who even ordered the false teachers to be seized and executed (vs. 40).

(6) **Psalms:** Among the 150 psalms in the book of Psalms are a number that are classified as "imprecatory" psalms (e.g., 7,35,55,58,59,69,79,109,137,139). In these psalms, the inspired writer invokes severe denunciations and curses on the enemies of God. Expressions like, "Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly" (35:8), and "Let them go down alive into hell (sheol)" (55:15), would, to the "politically correct" mindset of many in America today, be viewed as "bashing" people. But this assessment would be premature, immature, and unspiritual. The imprecatory psalms



serve several noble purposes, including (1) encouraging the wicked to turn to God, (2) confirming God's righteous judgment against the wicked, and even (3) comforting the righteous and stimulating them to praise God (7:17). Such piercing expressions can actually indicate possession of a depth of righteous regard for what is right and pure that imitates God Himself (cf. the phrase "zealous with My zeal" in Numbers 25:11; also Miller, 2013). We must nurture and shape our own spiritual sensibilities to mirror God's.

### NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

**M**OVING to the New Testament, Jesus was the Master example of defending the Faith in public to the point of openly rebuking those who championed error.

(1) **Matthew 23** constitutes a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees. This obviously **harsh** rebuke (cf. Proverbs 15:10) was done publicly in the presence of both His disciples as well as a "multitude" (vs. 1) of people—with the Pharisees apparently present as well, whom Jesus addressed directly (vss. 13ff.). While this forceful, direct condemnation was not typical of Jesus' interactions, it was nevertheless appropriate and exemplary. Observe closely some of the expressions Jesus used to identify the scribes and Pharisees: "hypocrites," "blind guides," "fools," and "brood of vipers." He used several penetrating, abrasive words to identify their behaviors. Yet, we know Jesus never said or did anything that was unChristlike, unkind, or inappropriate. By today's skewed sensibilities, there's no question that Jesus "bashed" the scribes and Pharisees. But call it what you will, He did nothing wrong. Hence, **identifying immoral behavior and false religion today is not inherently wrong**. [NOTE: While religious liberals typically identify the moral and religious conservative as "pharisaical"

(or "the radical right"), the fact is, quite ironically, the exact opposite is true. Those who are lax in the strictures of the Bible and Christian morality are the spiritual heirs of pharisaism. As Jesus declared in Matthew 15: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). **They** are the ones who are "blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14).]

(2) **John 2**: When Jesus cleansed the temple (twice), driving the moneychangers and their animals out of the temple, pouring out their monies, and overturning their tables (Matthew 21:12; John 2:15), He must have appeared to be incredibly abrasive, harsh, mean-spirited, intolerant, fanatical, unkind, and bigoted. He certainly would be perceived today as "bashing." Yet, again, we know that the holy Son of God did nothing wrong. The carnally minded person may well have difficulty comprehending such actions, but the "spiritually minded" (Romans 8:6) person grasps the gravity of the situation and understands the necessity of firm action. The eternal destiny of precious human souls is at stake!

(3) **Acts 5**: The names of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, are recorded publicly for all time, even as Peter's confrontation of their actions was public. The events caused awareness of their deeds to spread throughout the area (vs. 11).

(4) **Acts 18**: Apollos engaged in public refutation of those Jews who conflicted with the truth: "for he vigorously refuted the Jews **publicly**, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:28).

(5) **1 Corinthians 5**: One of the members of the church in Corinth

was guilty of fornication. Fornication in New Testament (Koine) Greek is a broad term that includes illicit sexual intercourse of every kind—including homosexuality, bestiality, bisexuality, and pedophilia (Reisser, 1975, 1:497-500). Yet, Paul enshrined in an inspired document for all time a public condemnation of the wayward member, and insisted that the church take **public** action against him: "when you are **gathered together**...deliver such a one to Satan" (vs. 4, emp. added). They were to "purge out the old leaven" (vs. 7) and "put away from yourselves the evil person" (vs. 13). All these instructions entail public identification and declaration of a single individual's spiritual infractions. Immoral behavior (e.g., homosexuality), political principles (e.g., socialism, Marxism, atheistic communism), and religious ideologies (e.g., Islam) that undermine Christian civilization, the core concepts on which America was founded, must be exposed and refuted publicly—even as they are flaunting themselves in the public sector. Organizations, politicians, and individuals who foment the moral and religious corruption of society—in government, education, and beyond—must be confronted.

(6) **Galatians 2**: Paul included inspired, public remarks concerning the misconduct of even a fellow apostle:

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, **I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed**; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter **before them all**, "If you, being a Jew, live

(cont. on p. 104)



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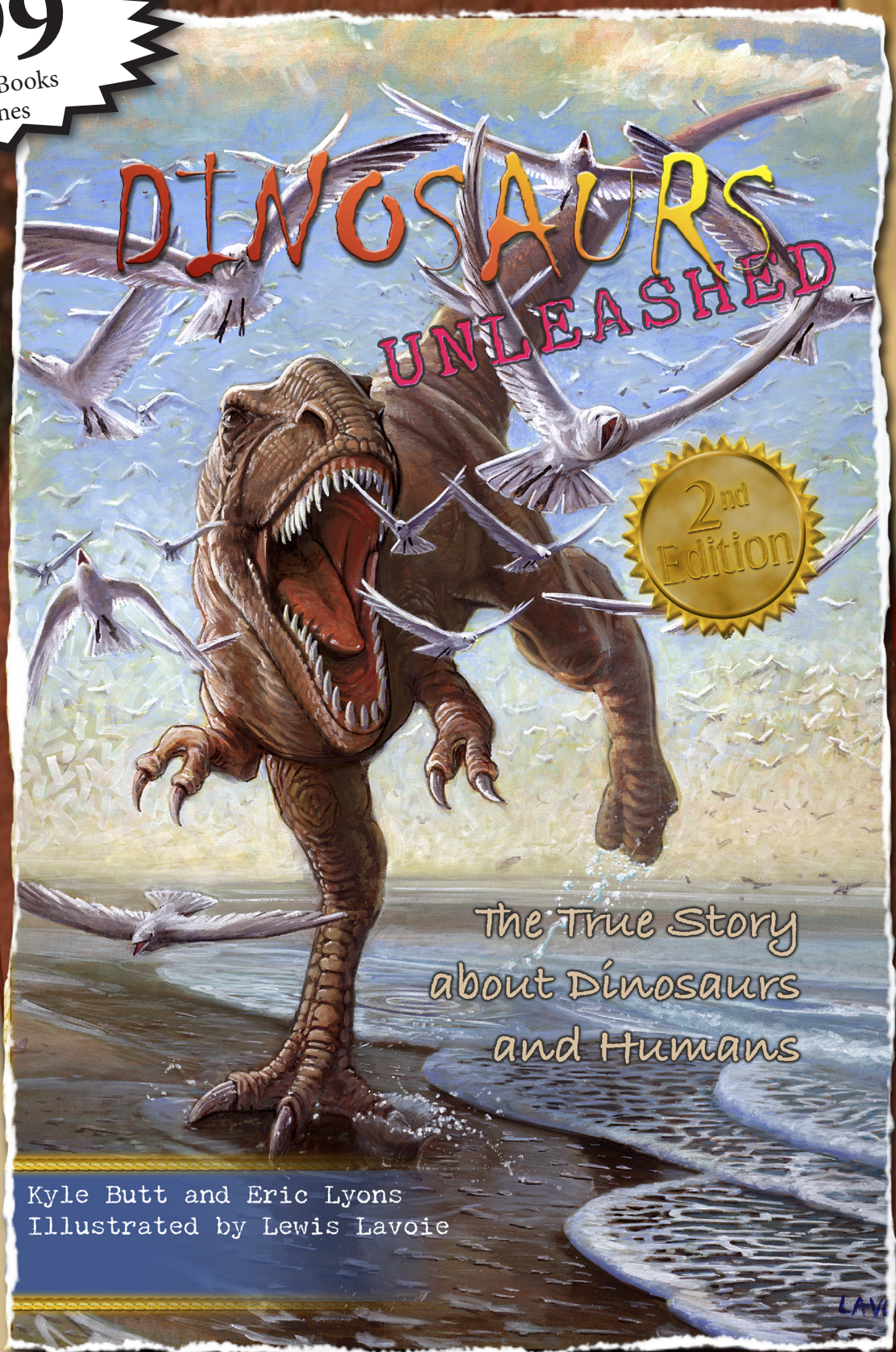
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in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" (Galatians 2:11-14, emp. added).

The phrase "before them all" is rendered "in front of them all" in the NIV, and "in the presence of all" in the NASB. The action was done **publicly**. Was Paul guilty of being unkind? Was he guilty of "bashing" Peter, or failing to treat Peter the way he, himself, wanted to be treated? To ask is to answer.

(7) **1 Timothy 5:** Paul informed Timothy that for elders who sin, he should "rebuke **in the presence of all**, that the rest also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20). Observe: not only are there situations in which even the leaders of a church are to be publicly reprimanded, but a critical and extremely significant **purpose** is served: "that the rest also may fear." Public confrontation of those who dispense moral or doctrinal error is one important means by which the spread of that or similar misconduct may be checked and discouraged (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:6; Deuteronomy 13:11; 17:13; 19:20; 21:21). Public identification of error, and those who espouse and spread it, is a very valuable aid in helping people to sort through the issues and keep themselves on the straight and narrow. It is also a powerful stimulus to avoid misconduct, since we typically wish to avoid being shamed publicly (2 Thessalonians 3:14). One of the tragic features of America's spiral into moral degradation has been the failure of society to maintain public disapproval of misbehavior—from punishing school children in the classroom with paddling and other forms of public shame, the shaming of unwed mothers, public condemnation of sexual perversion, and a host of other actions that aid in keeping a civilization from rushing toward moral depravity and eventual destruction. Once evil was allowed to "come out of the closet" and be "tolerated" without culture-wide

expressions of disapproval, a landslide of corruption has been the inevitable result in our society. The propaganda of "tolerance" and "bashing" is fomenting and hastening America's moral and spiritual downfall.

(8) **1 Timothy 1:** Consider Paul's admonition to the young preacher Timothy:

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may **wage the good warfare**, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, **of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan** that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:18-20, emp. added).

Observe that Paul not only enshrined **publicly** the names of two people for the entire world for all time, he also instructed Timothy as an evangelist to wage spiritual warfare (2 Timothy 2:3ff.) by standing up to those who manifest faulty faith and seared consciences. Paul's comments to Timothy about these wayward individuals were public, and not even directly addressed to Hymenaeus and Alexander. The remarks were an admonition to Timothy **about** them, in precisely the same way that concerned citizens today warn about the threat of false religion and sexual perversion to the spiritual health of the nation. Thus, to mention names in this way cannot be construed as gossip or slander. In fact, Paul made clear that Christians are to turn such impenitent people over to Satan in hopes of teaching them a lesson. [NOTE: To "turn over to Satan" was an expression that meant to acknowledge publicly that the individual had abandoned God's truth and thus removed himself from the kingdom and placed himself back under the influence of Satan (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:4).] And

notice that "fighting the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12), and the fact that "we wrestle...against spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12), and "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:4) are admonitions that must inevitably entail public confrontation of spiritual adversaries. The presentation of the precepts of the Gospel inevitably includes "rebuke" (2 Timothy 4:2). To suggest that we cannot or should not name names or speak out against immoral behavior is to hamper the accomplishment of the very task God has assigned to Christians in their spiritual warfare.

(9) **2 Timothy 1/2:** Paul made similar remarks in his second letter to Timothy:

This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are **Phygellus and Hermogenes**.... But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. **Hymenaeus and Philetus** are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some (2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18, emp. added).

Once again, calling specific people's names and the moral error they promote is fully scriptural and Christlike. Notice also that these comments were made to Timothy, not directly to the individuals to whom Paul was referring. Observe further that doing so may help other people's moral and spiritual condition from being overthrown.

(10) **2 Timothy 3:** Some 1,500 years after-the-fact, by divine inspiration, Paul recorded the names of what appear to be the Egyptian magicians that withstood Moses and Aaron in their efforts to convince Pharaoh of God's truth: "Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:8).



This public name-calling was issued in the context of those who were contemporary with Timothy who were guilty of the same behavior as the Egyptians of old.

(11) **2 Timothy 4**: Paul's final inspired instructions to Timothy include the following:

[F]or **Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world**, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. **Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words** (2 Timothy 4:10-15, emp. added).

Observe that if it is right and proper to name the names of those who do right and remain faithful, it is just as scriptural to name the names of those who do not.

(12) **Titus 1**: Paul issued comparable instructions to the evangelist Titus in his work on the Island of Crete. These instructions included the inevitability of public debate to silence purveyors of error and to prevent them from subverting whole households (1:10ff.). Again, public identification of those who promote morally harmful or spiritually destructive ideas and behaviors is indispensable to inhibiting the spread of damaging influences.

### SUMMARY

**T**HINK of it: Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Zimri, Cozbi, Achan, Ananias, Sapphira, Phygellus, Hermogenes, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Jannes, Jambres, Demas—names forever ensconced in the annals of inspired

writ, along with many others (e.g., Judas). **Is the Author of the Bible a “basher”?** Was He unkind, unloving, rude, or “intolerant” for calling such names? For those who still have respect for the Bible as the Word of God, the answer is obvious. A host of additional examples are found in the pages of Holy Writ. The Bible clearly teaches that naming names and identifying specific individuals, religions, and groups with regard to their beliefs and practice is not inherently wrong. Indeed, if the Bible were being authored today, the Holy Spirit would certainly include the names of those who promote moral depravity and false religion, even as He did in the first century (e.g., Revelation 2:6, 14-15, 20; 3:16). Such action is, in fact, **required** by God of those who wish to be counted faithful to Him. Indeed, the concept of public confrontation of sin is an extremely prominent doctrine—a feature that coincides with and emanates from the very nature of God.

The above instances, and a host just like them, demonstrate that part of the nature of God is to address fatal error openly and publicly. After all, “[o]pen rebuke is better than love carefully concealed” (Proverbs 27:5). Hence, those who perpetuate the “bashing” myth in our society, to be consistent, must pronounce God Himself to be harsh, unloving, and guilty of bashing people. They must view themselves as more loving than deity. Such is the conundrum into which a person places himself when he buys into the liberal agenda. But God is perfect, unable to sin, and the very essence of love (1 John 4:7-8). He endorses naming specific people and groups. Hence, the “politically correct” segment of society, including religious liberals, are simply misguided by the arrogant claim to be more loving and understanding than God and everyone else.

Observe that anytime a person makes a negative comment publicly regarding the actions of any present or past historical figure (e.g., Barack Obama, George Bush, Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, Napoleon, Nero, George Washington, Charles Manson, Bonnie and Clyde, etc.), that person is logically engaging in the same behavior that this article defends. If it is wrong to make verbal, public assessments of politicians and historical personages, then history books are sinful if they include any remarks of a negative nature—pointing out mistakes or even evil actions performed by those individuals (e.g., murder, bank robbery, conquering nations). Indeed, the Bible itself records the sinful actions committed by hundreds of individuals throughout the centuries. The person who condemns public confrontation of error, while reading and accepting the Bible, is guilty of duplicitous conduct.

The issue, then, is not **whether** error and misbehavior should be identified publicly, but rather **how** it is identified, i.e., in what manner and with what spirit and attitude. God loves the sinner but hates the sinner's sin (Romans 12:9; Jude 22-23). But this love cannot necessarily be seen in the outward acts that God manifests in dealing with false religion and immorality, since many of His confrontations throughout Bible history have appeared on the surface, to the unspiritual mindset, to be rather harsh. Hence, when a human confronts error, observers must take care that they do not assume that the confronter's motive is insincere or unloving. There may well be external indicators that would lead one to conclude that the accuser is unloving and unconcerned for the souls of those he may challenge. But one must not assume anything merely on account of the **act** of pinpointing error.

## IS PUBLIC REBUKE EVER INAPPROPRIATE?

### Born of Animosity

The Bible most certainly indicates that there are limitations and restrictions with regard to public rebuke. Some examples would include occasions in which the speaker shows an unmistakable attitude of contempt for those he criticizes. He may smirk disrespectfully or use snide words that are demeaning, even crude. He may presume to know the motives and make judgments about a person's heart. He may say things that are clearly personal attacks, rather than remaining focused on the specific doctrinal or moral issue under consideration. He might even convey to his hearers a personal dislike for the person he criticizes, rather than manifesting a genuine love and desire that the wayward be reclaimed and his soul be saved (Proverbs 10:18).

### False Accusation

Another case where public rebuke is wrong is when the one doing the rebuking does not have his facts correct. In doing so, he fails to speak the truth. He becomes guilty of unrighteous judgment and making illegitimate assessments without sufficient evidence—thus judging according to the “appearance” of things (John 7:24). He is guilty of false accusation (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 19:18-19; Luke 3:14), and perhaps even slander (Proverbs 10:18; 2 Timothy 3:3). Further, there is the situation in which the accuser is guilty of the very thing he condemns in others (Romans 2:1; John 8:1-11). In addition to his hypocrisy, he is guilty of discrediting the legitimacy of the cause he advocates. Jesus articulated the antidote for such a one: “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:5).

### Handle Privately

There are also clear situations in which a wayward person should first receive private instruction rather than being confronted publicly with his infractions (e.g., Matthew 18:15; Acts 18:26). Yet such instances do not imply that all public rebuke is wrong, or must be preceded by private contact. When “ravenous wolves” in “sheep's clothing,” who have an ongoing history of promoting moral evil and subverting many people, are devouring the flock—be it the church, the court, or the country—time is of the essence, and a response in kind, i.e., as public and direct as his own tactics, is called for. He should be publicly identified (see Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:29, and Romans 16:17 with regard to God's warnings about false teachers). Satan wants the truth to be stifled so that he can make unimpeded progress. Being silent and avoiding direct confrontation leaves people spiritually vulnerable.

One must also take into consideration the audience in front of whom the public rebuke occurs. We ought to be careful about *carte blanche* “airing of dirty laundry” in the presence of those who do not need to hear the information.

Genuine love for the kingdom of Christ and the souls involved will cause one to use discretion as to how far and wide the matter is repeated. Creating a Web site for the whole world to see, in order to broadcast the alleged misdeeds of a fellow Christian far beyond the relevant audience, is hardly wise, judicious, circumspect, kind, or useful.

### Gossip

We must also recognize the difference between appropriate public rebuke and the sin of gossip. We humans seem to gravitate toward tidbits of information that expose the failings of others. Without going into the detail that such a subject merits (since the Bible has a great deal to say about the sins of gossip, slander, backbiting, whispering, tale-bearing, reviling, and the like: Romans 1:30; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Timothy 3:11; 5:13; Titus 2:3; 1 Peter 2:1; James 4:11; et al.), let it be said that public rebuke of persons who promote error cannot inherently be gossip—since, as amply noted above, God did it and requires the faithful to do it. The intent of the heart of the confronter, the purpose of the rebuke, and the nature and certainty of the error being identified are a few

## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Kyle Butt

September 7-8	Doniphan, MO	(573) 660-2423
September 11	Huntsville, AL	(256) 895-8717
September 28	Fort Payne, AL	(256) 643-5816

### Eric Lyons

September 27-29	Live Oak, FL	(386) 364-5922
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### Dave Miller

September 1	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
September 5-7	Crossville, TN	(931) 484-5297
September 13-15	Hebron, KY	(859) 283-1075
September 20-22	W. Palm Beach, FL	(561) 848-1111

### Jeff Miller

September 4	Huntsville, AL	(256) 895-8717
September 21-22	Indianapolis, IN	(317) 887-1007



of the criteria that serve to distinguish between gossip and legitimate public confrontation.

## AN OBJECTION

CONSIDER one objection that has been offered in response to the thesis of this article: “Just because God or His inspired emissaries called names and pinpointed false religion and immoral persons publicly, it does not follow that we are qualified or authorized to do so—we’re not God and we’re not inspired.” This quibble fails to recognize that if God called names and specified purveyors of error publicly (and endorsed others who did so), such behavior cannot be taboo. If speaking against immorality and false religion is inherently wrong and unloving, then God would not have engaged in such behavior. God Himself and the emissaries He endorsed would be guilty of sin. On the contrary, it is evident from the ongoing application of this principle that God authorizes—and even requires—its use by all persons, when done correctly and accurately. Further, since this behavior is obviously part of the very nature of God, and since our constant desire should be to want to be like God, we should emulate Him in our revulsion of the destructive error promoted by individuals and groups that will result in the loss of souls (cf. Numbers 25:11,13). Indeed, to confront error is Christlike. The sober warning of the apostle Peter sounds eerily apropos to America today:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words (2 Peter 2:1-3).

What would God have us to do under such circumstances? “[E]xhort and convict those who contradict” and “rebuke them sharply” (Titus 1:9,13). “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). “[E]ven so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

## A WORD OF CAUTION

TWO cautionary considerations: First, there are those who claim to be Christian who have a reputation for conducting themselves like rabid dogs that bite, tear, and devour those who disagree with them (cf. Galatians 5:15). They resort to unchristian behavior and tactics under the guise that they are contending for the faith. As Paul explained to the Philippian Christians: “Some indeed preach Christ even **from envy and strife**, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ **from selfish ambition, not sincerely**” (vss. 15-16, emp. added). Such persons are self-condemned, and do more harm to the cause than good. Their behavior is certainly not the action that this article advocates, and we do not endorse such wicked behavior. But, in our haste to refrain from emulating such individuals, we must not allow ourselves to go to the other extreme and fail to oppose that which God expects to be publicly opposed.

Second, not every difference of opinion on a particular matter merits public confrontation. In fact, sadly, much ungodly, unnecessary division has been foisted upon society, doing untold damage to the cause of Christ and the tranquility of the church, by those who relish contention, strife, and wrangling with others on matters of opinion. Christians are permitted by God to hold differing opinions on a host of matters that have no eternal consequence, and that do not affect a person’s spiritual standing before God.

Christians must grow to the point that they are able to distinguish between matters of option and matters of obligation, and make certain that any public disturbances are necessitated by the latter, not the former (cf. Hebrews 5:14).

May we strive in our study of the Bible to become acquainted with the God of the Bible, and to seek to be like Him (to the extent that we frail human beings are able to do so). May God bless us with unwavering determination to “have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). May we rise up in the midst of a civilization that is in the throes of a moral and spiritual freefall and, “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), articulate the will of the Creator for all people.

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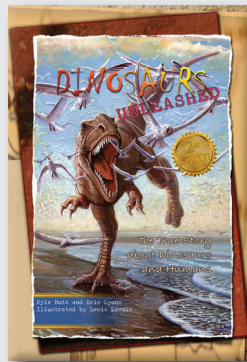
## NOTE FROM *The Editor*



### A.P.'s First Interactive Book

In 2005, Apologetics Press released a volume that was destined to become a classic—*Dinosaurs Unleashed*—a book for kids on dinosaurs. In 2008, the book was revised and enhanced. Written on a 3rd-6th grade level, it has continued to occupy a prominent place among A.P.'s most popular products, with more than 30,000 in print. We believe it has been beneficial to tens of thousands of young people in providing the biblical view of dinosaurs and assisting them to withstand the evolutionary propaganda that surrounds the existence of dinosaurs and their relationship to humans.

Now A.P. has teamed up with Anchor Digital Bible to produce a cutting-edge electronic resource unlike any that you have ever seen. With the text of *Dinosaurs Unleashed* as the framework, this interactive book has been developed to allow young people to explore material never before available in one medium. Instead of turning the static page of a written book and seeing one or two pictures per page, young people can now activate an entire gallery of pictures with the touch of a screen. In addition, rotating 3-D models,



that accurately and beautifully illustrate various aspects of dinosaur anatomy, are scattered throughout the book, as well as interactive puzzles, coloring pages, and videos. We continue to believe that this is one of the most fascinating books ever produced by creationists on the subject of dinosaurs. And now, living as we are in an unprecedented electronics age, we are confident that the new *Dinosaurs Unleashed* interactive digital book will

continue to have a tremendous impact, not only on this generation, but if the Lord allows the world to stand, also on future generations as young readers devour this most remarkable resource about dinosaurs.

See the centerspread of this issue of *R&R* to learn how to access this fascinating tool for your own children or grandchildren, neighborhood kids, friends, and relatives.

**Dave Miller**

See the Center Spread  
for More Details